Notes: Old age

Tarbell, Ida M.
Old Age:

I am beginning to see more clearly than ever, even more serious than the physical problems and social problems, which old age brings, the problems of accepting this world as it is, the realization that the disillusionments which come with middle life, the consciousness of the unsatisfactory condition that somehow to be accepted as a fact of life as it is by most people, it has got to be accepted. If one had hoped to consider something which would be of a greater big value in bringing/order into the world he has got to face the fact that what he has done is not only forgotten but it is out of line with the way the world is going. It is almost as if it were a useless contribution. That is more than disillusionment, it is cutting the ground out from under your feet. There is a problem for you.
Old Age:

If these last years bring you satisfaction they also bring you many memories of your short-comings, painful to me as I am confronted with the proofs in my dusty files of letters that I did not write, letters of sympathy, congratulation, counsel, laid aside until I felt I had the right word - not the right word but a word - to say, not merely convention. And finally to write the letter at all would be emphasize neglect.

And the things I might have done to bring relief, flexibility, rejuvenation that I let go because of a groucho or fatigue. Oh, what's the use to walk through one's life along the path of one's life. If you keep your eye on this sort of it is a melancholy business. But luckily I am still sufficiently still/sufficiently interested in the things I did do, the joys I did have, to be able to bind my eye to the things I neglected.

Regrets flourish along the path of life as well as achieve-
ments and joys. The gardening thing to recall is the inclemency of relations and ties, nothing fixed, enduring. This was one of my early sorrows. I remember that when we moved to Titusville from Oil City I left behind the most intimate friend I ever had - Laura Seigel. It seemed unbelievable that life could go on happily without Laura. When I formed a new girl attachment I had a sense of disloyalty and when not so long after Laura who was older than I became engaged and was married I had that she had deserted - something had been broken.
Old Age:

What it simmers down to is how are you going to make this last period desirable? Can life remain desirable if it requires the limitation of so many activities and interests which have filled other years, the activite dissipation in current affairs, the cutting off of dinners and amusements and good works - the physical limitations? It is a matter of cutting it with your mind, I think, the ruling of the spirit, the sanity of keeping up, looking young, acting young when you don't feel young, is Whent you don't feel young can it be over-come, be replaced by philosophic acceptance of limitations?

See Letter of Adelaide Johnston - my old colleague in Poland- now eighty two and a half. She is evidently so adjusted to limitations that she is having an enjoyable, contented life.
The Second Fifty:

Pearl Buck as a novelist.
Malvina Hoffman as a sculptress - unquestioned.

I see the possibility of introducing the
citizen's executive, the woman who heads big enterprises,
philanthropic, civilian. Probably Mrs. Belmont the best
time.
Her work both for the Metropolitan and in the depression.
Old Age:

It is not the fun you have had that matters so much not but the fun you are having now – today – what you have got in the past, but what you are able to get now, is the interesting thing. It is continuing to live, notcontending that you have lived. From productivity and struggle and serenity are things of the past. But make no mistake unless you are willing to consent to consider today, that is if you are young, keeping alive real vitality you are not going to have it.
Old Age:

I don't know whether it is old age or the fear that is on us of what may be hanging over the world that makes those of us who were intimates thirty, forty years ago, who have always kept our friendships although perhaps without much expression, without much assistance, cling to each other so. I do not know any other word for it. That was the feeling I had after the pull together, the Winley birthday party, the feeling that I had today with the Halls and the Phillips, that I have with Rosie - as if we all wanted to go into a huddle to re-assure ourselves that affection, friendship, and the ideas that we have always held, the companionship we found in each other, as if it were a real thing, stable, that nothing however the world may rock this abides.
Old Age.

The repetition goes nowhere. When it
doesn't work, they keep
up for the full time.

A man yarning toSEAL-1
must wear belt after barn - after
Dean's City. Waller-y - the at near
notVY called - the flurry of sleep
occurs. It is quickly
in time for thinking - adjourn-
ning - coping - study of a proven med-
ality of health - mostly a dead-a sleeping
20 days of all time.

But when you made what you did -
Keep - repetitio without it. Only the
Limebrand - the manner really it
all again - is a clumsy way. It
sundaequeq - I dream on you. 8.00
no-punny - Lillie Apple trouble
just fast toward.

Trying to link a bird - until she sits
- strong the elements up - while it may.
Old Age:

Fine point of adjusting yourself, adjusting your activities to your years, the keeping out of the way of the growing flood of youth, and at the same time using harmlessly your own powers - certain things strike me and could be developed.

1) I constantly am bored by the excitement of the same problems which excited the world at the beginning of this Century, for instance, and back again in the '80's. That is, there is a cycle of interest, a social cycle like the business cycle, and all that I hear talked so heatedly about now seems to me an echo, repetitious. In so far as I feel that I prove my own lack of response to the age while fundamentally the problems may be the same form it is different. One of these problems which excite us now is built on what was done twenty-five, fifty years ago. It is a spiral, as well as a cycle. Then the problem for those growing old is somehow to adjust their disillusionment and the boredom to realize just what hasn't been done, and the heat and the excitement of youth in trying to do that it might be possible for age to serve by pointing out the reason why we did not twenty-five, fifty, years ago succeed in doing more.- the danger of making the same mistakes now that were made in Theodore Roosevelt's time, for instance, Cleveland's time.

The second thing that I should certainly be
considering

is this admirable phrase of Chief Justice Hughes quoted by Roosevelt in his Supreme Court document-

"It seems to be tenacious of the appearance
of adequacy."

Now there is the ——— of it — that of
which Rosie accuses me—that I hang on when I should give up. Hanging on is no great conviction of adequacy, but I like to keep up the appearance of it.

All of these things I think can be used in a second Old Age paper. And perhaps I could very well introduce my second fifty — if Dorothy Thompson comes to the P & B and I am around to introduce her. I think I might very well refer to my fifty, my former fifty, as women of my kind, and to suggest a second fifty which she certainly would be a prominent figure. I think I have no representative of high class journalism in my lot. I am rather thinking they would be of a different little type. That is, there would be more science, I would have to consult Dr. Sabin. And more business — here I would want to consult Mary Dillon. Probably the Lord & Taylor lady should go in here because she seems to have had a creative quality as most of these business women do not. The American styles, etc. mean something.

They must have the creative quality of continuing
Old Age - Last Chapter:

There must be summarizing up of my attitude, more as an observer who as an observer of today and has put aside the irresistible urge to report what he sees and how it affects him. The urge remains but it is resistible - lack of strength is sure to get in the way - the pressure of other things. All of this has kept me from putting down my reactions to what has been going on in the country in the last five years.

One of the perpetual but discouraging features of movements forward, what we call progress, distribution of property - all of that kind of thing - is that it is so often done without a background. The claim that the thing which they are doing is new in the world, prepared for the cause undertaken. There is nothing new in the world. No man or group of men begin things nor end things. All we can do is to try this or that, begin where somebody left off. This is the whole history of progress. No man claims that this idea, this effort of theirs, was born with them. Everybody who went before must be put out of the way if they take the view that assassination is not a justifiable political weapon. Where one sees what he is doing as a progressive movement he can learn why it didn't go in the days before him. Labor today if it had been willing to study the case of the Knights of Labor, for instance, would have been able to avoid many of the manoeuvres and methods that threaten the dissolution of what might have been a great and substantial movement.
If they had studied their own history with a self-correcting mind it would have discovered both the danger of using as weapons to scare the public into line the element that we always have with us, a part of the human force, that movement that believes in what is called direct action, destruction of the existing thing in order to make a new thing. Labor has not subscribed in this country as an organized unit to that policy. But for fifty years it has been steadily using that policy, used it as the Knights of Labor used it, disclaiming—its value to its destruction. Much more conservatively and cautiously the A F of L has used it. It was a powerful weapon in the strike in 1912. Samuel Gompers did not wish that strike but the political elements which he was not ready to disown wished it. Political elements today are being used by the peasants of the great round up to which Mr. Roosevelt has given such impetus. And that and haste are threatening to throw back a program which some of us have been working for steadily for fifty years.

What are the essentials of the program of the New Deal? How does this differ from the program, let us say of Richard Ely in the '80s? How does it differ from the program of and Theodore Roosevelt?

Elbert Gary? Of Woodrow Wilson? Of the President's second Industrial Conference? The question for liberal and progressive believers in this great round up today should ask themselves why these ideas which they advocate did not go faster. How did they conflict with the human laws, the laws of human nature, which they must use as the engineer uses the force of electricity? Haste,
unwillingness to admit that they are but a link in the great chain of upward movement that the world has been carrying on through the centuries which will not be denied that which is put back not simply by the greed of men as the progressives would have us think, but by their fear of progress and quite as much by the vanity of having the whole credit, by the unwillingness to admit the past and its part in the progressive movement, the unwillingness to admit there was a progressive movement.

It is the same kind of attitude that disturbed me so long in what was called the Women's Movement. Of course there must be a change. Mr. Ford is right - life is not a location it is a journey and that is the definition of the liberal mind. A journey means effort, a struggle, a very definite notion of where you are going, of the difficulties that may lie in your way and those difficulties you have to learn from the experience of the previous travellers.

All this elementary/philosophy has been running through my mind in these last ten years of declining strength, the urge to speech my mind.

Most particularly do I think this liberal philosophy has worked badly on youth. If it were not so harmful it would be comic, the way that the youth of today throws itself into contemptuous criticism of the generation which has fathered it.

A couple of years ago I was a member of a body which I think was one of the most foolish undertakings that I have ever heard of from sensible educational quarters and which I should never have myself if I had understood what it was all about, was a public questioning of youth from sixteen to
eighty on their difficulties - what they thought of us. They
sent an audience of some five hundred into a shriek of laughter
by a sincere flinging out, "We do not want to be like you."
The general notion that nothing had been done to improve the
condition in the last twenty or forty years, that the difficulties
results of a and
of today were the/calculated policy of ignorance./selfishness.
There was no shadow of notion that they were inheriting anything
that was good, no shadow that they had a responsibility to carry
on what was good, shifted from what is bad. There was not one
in the body of youth whose situations calculated from what he,
himself, presented was not immeasurably - to be conservative let us
say measurably better - than his circumstance would have been if
he had been born twenty years before, forty years before. Take
the chance of education, the chance for entertainment and health
in a town like New York City where this foolish show was staged.
There was no sense in the part character played. There was a
weakness in this youth movement - the lack of the individual's part -
and that comes I suppose of his ignorance of this human force and its exhibits, what you can expect
of it and what you cannot, what you can expect of yourself.

Now all these things while they may worry the
observer of eighty years do not discourage. He knows better.
So it was twenty years ago, so it was thirty years ago. What had
they fifty years ago? In the matter of those material things on
which their mind seems to be set - the easy life which they seem to
want, the opportunity to do as they will which they seem to want. You cannot be too dogmatic about this. Remember that there is a great deal of noise made about the ills of the world, that we listen to the noisy ones and you hear nothing from those who really are making the country, those who peg away trying to find their way.

There was my boy, Bill. It might be possible to tell Bill's story. That is, for every ten who are wailing about the things of the past generation there are a thousand youths in this country pegging away, seizing the opportunities, determined just as a percentage of those who have gone before in every generation are determined. These are some of the things that console your eighty years old in all this confusion.

The basis of it is that certain things have been shoved into the world and are more generally spread than ever before and you have seen them/in your fifty years of observation - the unity of the world - the greed of training - the distribution of what wealth, not particularly of money, of what money buys, the comforts which are infinitely better distributed - beauty infinitely more at hand - p infinitely more scattered - all life is gradually coming into line, fighting for these things. No, not a location, it is a journey and it is a hard journey and will be for many generations. The very fundamentals of that journey are not understood - it must be made according to the laws of the human forces, that machinery won't push you ahead anymore than the machine unless it is adapted to all the strains, just as the electric machine does nothing unless it is adapted to all its vagaries. Remember how much it has taken of human life and human energy to show to men that they must use the electric current
according to its nature, not according to their wish. The

cost of the alternate current for instance as an example.

If you preach to yourself, you can control your-
self. You have your moments of despair for the world, the moments
when you are over-tired, when you need a good sleep, a day in the
country away from it.

And it brings you back to the consolation of
nature and the great wisdom of the Mosaic law which established
one day in seven to rest, one day of forgetfulness, contemplation
of the good and the beautiful. The philosophical effect
of this long vacation, of the change of work - all this is practical
wisdom which saves the irritated nervous strain which you know
to have ruined so many good things in which you are interested.

These are the reflections of eighty and somehow
living you make it more tolerable and make dying less welcome.
There is something distinctly disconcerting to one working who all her life has accepted and largely practiced the philosophy of individualism to suddenly realize that she is a social problem, a problem which is created by the unavoidable passing of years colliding with the growing philosophy that society for man or woman to produce, that is produce what is paid for, after their three score years and ten, indeed after three score and five according to some severe

What a person who has kept up their bread earning is to four score is faced with the probability that their craft organized as it seems to be rapidly organizing will soon shut down on them. To be sure this is no sudden development. The industry has organized itself on the sixty five year age limit pretty generally, even in the United States Steel Corporation the we see/excellent leader, Myron Taylor, withdrawing at sixty five. The excellent Mr. Irwin withdrawing because he will soon be sixty five.

The thing happens in the teaching world. The teaching world is rapidly getting itself on to this sixty five basis. We won't in this connection say anything about the Supreme Court, only it does seem however Congress decides that there shall be no member of the judiciary older than sixty five. What about its Congress? If a man cannot be a good judge after he is sixty five can he be a good Congressman?

If they put all the rest of us on the sixty five basis we may have something to say about that.

If industrial executives, Judicial Judges of the Court,
school teachers, college professors, are not to be allowed to work after a certain age how about writers? Have we any right we who rail at special privilege to ask that the age limit be stretched for us? There are curious contradictions in the busy efforts of the men of the world who perform it.

Here are the scientists actually extending life.

( ) years on an average have been added in the last fifty years to peoples life. It comes not only from advances in medical science, it has come from the practical application of discoveries and inventions to our modes of living. The greatest advance in the standard of living come not through wages it has come through the way of doing things - freer communication - better water - sanitation - electric light. They have extended the standard of living and have been the great extender of our age. Women no longer wear themselves out with an interminable so many stairs, with such high ceilings, with / number of lamps to be cleaned, with the horror of the old ice box. Industry has done this for us. But while science and industry are extending our life the social science are questioning our right to use that extended period beyond a certain limit. We mess up their fine effort to produce an orderly fool-proof world - we have lived out /our usefulness to do more than repeat ourselves, believe all the creative energy has gone out of us. As a matter of fact they what they want is to get us out of the way.

To be perfectly honest that is what the world has always wanted about the old. It doesn't say so. Every old person who dies is a relief to somebody. They can give so much more bread
so much more room at the fireplace, it frees a bed.
All this sounds hard and harsh but that is about the truth of it in the great majority of cases. And when it comes to the entirely cold-blooded new social philosophy sweeping us off into our places and keeping us there only so long as we fulfill their idea of useful service, what is there for us?

Of course there is the pension, there is the possibility of a few of us that we have had our eye on this period for a long time and we have put aside something to tide us over independently.

Another point that should be made is that we ourselves are to blame for much doubt of our usefulness. Mr. Hughes has made the best characterization of those who hang on after three score and ten. The chief reason they want to give an appearance of adequacy. It is a great phrase.

But what is to be done with us as a mass?

The primitive perhaps on the whole a realistic way of dealing with this problem. They cut off their heads and sometimes did it by who ceased to be useful, and sometimes they did it by the request of the old itself who presented a reward to her favorite grandson.

We shudder at it, but after all why should be shudder at this decent way of getting out of the world when the social planners have decided that we no longer are welcome there? Why shudder bombing and at this when we tolerate the gassing of women and children for no other reason then they happen to be on a spot we want. It is of said the Soviet is stopping this practice of disposing of the old which they hear still exists in remote provinces. It seems to
me much more decent than the reported way of getting out people
who do not agree with them. These people are still in the
flush of youth and might be useful. The theory of getting
rid of the old in this way is that they are no longer useful
to themselves or to anybody else.

I am merely raising the problem and it seems to
me a quite proper one for the makers of our new good world to
consider.
J. S. P. tells me of Brownell saying, "I'm dying last at the top." And that book of his "Democracy" so strewed with insights and limitations, that perhaps what goes on the problem admits the limitations and tries to save it. There is this question of memory on which I have notes and should develop.

Can it be saved after seventy five? Look up the story of Emerson, coming home from Longfellow's funeral and saying, "That was a gentle soul we buried today, what was his name?" Are there any remedies for this, other than the old one of making the mind hang on. Is that effective? Is it not better to let the mind do what it can intelligently, rather than to force it to do something without disturbing capacity.

When the whole mind of the world is grappling with the insoluble as today, trying to force itself to some mechanistic solution that will right everything, make us handle credits and money, sure that this is the way to sure that this is the way to produce and consume. Limitations keep men holding fast to something they can understand, their vanity keeps them from admitting that there are things they do not understand. This should be a question after all, at least for me of doing what I can, that is I may not see more than an inch ahead, if an inch, but what I see let me say and not let me depend that I see to the end and above all not let me feel that the path I am striving to reach that end is necessity the only one, the true one.
Paragraph on Old Age from Gertrude Brownell's Letter to J. S. P.

Even when I was young I always loved old people--numbers of my dearest friends were distinctly old. And in a way I now see why, better than I did then, when I could not analyze their charm for me. I can't now--but I know that a fine modesty--humility--was an element in this loveableness. When we are old we have stopped blaming others for anything that happens to us--we know that it is somehow our own fault--our failure to use our imagination, the grossness of our perceptions--our invincible amour-propre. We know that we are dust and are grateful in believing that He remembers it.

If often wonder at the decency of the old in letting the fact that they know--inevitably--that "the things concerning them have an end," find so little expression--never saddening the atmosphere with it, and--so little, usually--with the symptoms of this gradual lapsing.

To know so much better, as we do in old age, what human nature is, is such a priceless good that not for anything would one miss it. We stop blaming so readily--and try to understand and be fair--and we know that the world can only be made better by you and me and our lives.
Old Age: Talk:

Every fifty years or so the Bible is revised, different meanings are given to its words to be brought up to the scholarship and also to the experience of mankind. Fifty score years and ten was the limit in the Psalmist time. Think how the world has changed to the matter of age as in everything else, of course/the sentimental emotions and varieties. If David were singing now of the sorrows of old age he would, I think, put it at four, perhaps five score. There are centenarians all around us and by reason of strength put it certainly at four score and ten. If added by reason of strength it becomes five score, etc. Still with with much Shakespeare, too, would have to revise his Seven Ages to bring it up to the year about the length of life, to invent at least two or three ages. He would have to cut out a lot of that nonsense about babbling and etc. He would have to mention trotting, and tennis playing, stock gambling, for his final age. gardening wiring recollection

Honeystreet plantation
Second Childhood - same letter
Chapter XVII: Old Age

The coming of old age - what it does to one.

Use article written I think about seventy five. The declining physical strength. Here ought to come in something of the utter disillusionment - the despair with the world. It is replaced by the historical perspective on the world as I have known it - a definite struggle, a struggle in which what a previous generation has demonstrated as its mistakes. I repeat it. That I was born in a Panic, that my life was affected by a succession of panics, at least every fifteen years. That these panics and depressions produced certain social governmental changes, left each generation a little ahead in its wealth, its standard of living, breadth of view, than the one before. That is, the cycles have also been a spiral. If the beginning of the industrial era forced two problems these problems have been steadily traced and something done about it. When we talk about the New Deal we really are talking about a round-up of what has been attempted for fifty years with increasing success, to cure the evils that the industrial development forces on a country. Nobody knew what the industrial development would do. When they began to see what it was doing to men and women there then began a change. They had to adapt their philogopy and their practices and their convictions to the new situation. So that there is a spiral in my judgment. It is difficult however, to see this when the agony is at its full heighth, revolution in sight, depressions, unemployment - misery in general. The truth of course recognizes only the evils that have been left him.
The story of the Youth Meeting. No realization of what we met in '93 out of which certain things have grown, one the possibility of their holding such a meeting - this in which they give their opinion of us.

Some kind of a closing paragraph
I find myself without a job – a free lance writer. But I have my certain independence – material – things I want to do. In the first place I want to complete the Standard Oil Company. The story of the book – why I did not do it. I wanted more – I wanted to go on with what was happening in industry, and the way I would take to do it.

Murphy – Arnold Bennett
Today (Aug 31st) John Bennet came into the church. My dear Mr. B. new despatch from England. I find the scene at a farming, also a lot of writing. I am in Sue 19th of July pleased with conditions.

"One for the folded calf" the under 19th.

August 2, Mr. J. Butt arrived. I still being y

Benjamin Howze & Elizabeth P. Purlin. He

なりのあるむもむをられた2b. りんに2. よりと


2 J.B. Shromals: "God for Senatus, Ncaci"
"the Westward Trend of American life, 1865-1880, 1880-1890, 1890-1894, "

"Punch from Our...

"resolve..."